

and commitment to others are rare gifts that this Nation was lucky to have.

It was interesting that one of the times I saw him, probably 25, maybe 30 years ago, I saw him in coveralls working around a building that was being demolished. He was cleaning bricks and had several people working with him.

□ 2015

Mr. Speaker, what I found was interesting, that he believed that godly men and women should serve their communities and should be role models for others within their communities, and he did that. Regardless of what the job might be, he was willing to work the dirtiest, the hardest, perhaps the lowest of jobs to encourage someone else to be a better person within his community.

He was a man who served his community with a great deal of pride and with a great deal of devotion. He was my friend. Interestingly, also, Reverend Howard would not want us to mourn today, so I ask Members to celebrate his life, that we should come together as Americans and continue to work toward the principles by which he lived which are so very important to each and every one of us and to our freedoms.

It is important that current and future generations understand the history of African Americans, of their struggle for freedom and the part that people like Martin Luther King, Jr., like the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) and, yes, like Reverend Ransom Howard played, the awesome part that they played.

Mr. Speaker, Reverend Ransom Howard was part of the fiber of Southeast Texas and, with his passing, a great loss will be felt in the spirit and the heart of our community. It has been said about some people, he knew his flock and his flock knew him; and in this case, they dearly loved him and will truly miss this great gentleman.

FCC VOTE ON MEDIA CROSS-OWNERSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my utmost frustration and disappointment with the Federal Communication Commission's vote today to relax media cross-ownership rules. I am frustrated by the process through which the Republican-controlled commission sought to manipulate its rulemaking by limiting public input and discussion. I am frustrated that the majority on the commission chose to ignore the overwhelming public opposition to the proposed rules, and I am disappointed that these commissioners failed to learn from existing evidence, especially in the area of radio ownership, the dan-

gerous impacts of unfettered media consolidation.

By voting to radically deregulate media ownership, this administration has created the most unimaginable atmosphere for further national and local concentration of media outlets, leading to the erosion of localism, diversity and competition so essential to a healthy democracy. I fear that as the media conglomerates move forward with the rulings and gobble up more and more independent outlets, not only will the consumers suffer from the lack of diverse voices on our airwaves, but the core values of what it means to live in a free and open society will be greatly demolished.

Many of my colleagues in both Chambers of Congress have expressed a great deal of skepticism toward today's FCC rule. Close to 150 Members of this House, including the Congressional Black Caucus, Hispanic Caucus and Asian and Pacific American Caucus have asked the FCC to delay its decision. That came in addition to nearly 750,000 e-mails, letters and phone calls from the public to the FCC expressing their opposition to the current rule-making process and the rule. All of them, including a letter I sent on behalf of 28 other Members of the Congressional Black Caucus, have fallen on deaf ears.

Over the entire course of the rule-making process, FCC Chairman Powell has held only two public hearings while meeting 71 times, I repeat, 71 times, with top broadcasters behind closed doors. How can we say that the FCC is following Congressional statutory guidance to serve the public's interest? How is the FCC performing its special duty as mandated by the Supreme Court to protect an uninhibited marketplace of ideas?

Chairman Powell says that the rule changes will help preserve free, over-the-air television, but free, over-the-air television is alive and well. Advertising revenues for free, over-the-air television were up 15 percent last year. However, it is not the job of the FCC to make sure that every network in this country makes a lot of money. It is the job of the FCC to make sure that Americans get a variety and diversity of viewpoints.

The bottom line is that as the rule changes lead to greater media consolidation, small and independent companies will be drowned out. Some critics have called it "the Wal-Mart effect," "the emergence of a 21st century Citizen Kane," as noted by Commissioner Adelstein. The big five media companies, Disney, Viacom, AOL-Time Warner, News Corp. and General Electric Company will end up squeezing out the small companies. It is already happening. The new rules will only speed up the process.

Ted Turner is right in saying that when small businesses get hurt, big ideas get lost. When the next Watergate happens, Americans need to know that a truly independent third estate

will be up to the task of conducting a free and independent investigation. Minorities are deeply suspicious of the rule changes. There is ample precedent for their feelings since the passage of the 1996 Telecommunications Act which resulted in a frenzy of media consolidation, radio station ownership has decreased by 30 percent. Many of the stations gobbled up were minority owned.

It was a bad decision at the FCC today.

Minority broadcasters believe that media consolidation has all but eliminated opportunities they need to expand their media companies. They can't expand or compete with the big players and are often left with one alternative: To sell.

It would have been prudent for the FCC to allow more time for public hearings as well as congressional input. We have been presented with a backroom deal that will dramatically change the structure of our media marketplace, significantly impact media diversity, and inhibit the free flow of information.

Today's adoption of media ownership rules represent a giant step backward for consumers, and as members of Congress we have a responsibility to exercise our legislative oversight role. As Commissioner Copps said today, this is only the beginning. I strongly urge my colleagues and the public to take up this important debate.

EXORBITANT PHARMACEUTICAL PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT), the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN), the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), and the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) and myself are going to be talking this hour about the problems that we have in this country with exorbitant pharmaceutical prices.

We all believe in the free enterprise system, and we believe that private industry ought to make a profit, but we also believe the American people ought to get the best bang for their buck. Unfortunately, the pharmaceutical industry has been taking advantage of Americans for a long, long time, and it is just now becoming evident.

The gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) made this chart up originally, and this chart, I know it is difficult for my colleagues to see, but it shows the disparity between pharmaceutical products purchased in the United States and those purchased in Canada. In some cases, products, pharmaceutical products manufactured here in the United States that are sold in other parts of the world, sell for one-tenth the price that they sell for here in the United States; and yet the American people, when they try to buy those products abroad through the